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PP RUEHBZ RUEHGI
DE RUEHGI #0029/01 0321520
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 011520Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1148
INFO RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 0024
RUEHDS/USMISSION USAU ADDIS ABABA 0001
RHMFISS/AFRICOM
RUEHBZ/AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE PRIORITY 0276
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY 0377
RUEHKE/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY 0390
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE PRIORITY 0289
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0232
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI PRIORITY 0208
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA PRIORITY 0578
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0576
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0205
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE PRIORITY 0554
RUEHGI/AMEMBASSY BANGUI 1456

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/C
USUN FOR DMUERS
PARIS FOR RKANEDA
LONDON FOR PLORD
NAIROBI FOR AKARAS
AFRICOM FOR JKUGEL
INR FOR JPEKKINEN
DRL FOR SCRAMPTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [CT](#)

SUBJECT: BOZIZE PARRIES OPPOSITION THIS TIME, BUT ELECTORAL CALENDAR
IS TIGHTENING

REF: A. A 09 BANGUI 181

[1](#)B. REF: B 09 BANGUI 203

[1](#)C. REF: C 09 BANGUI 46

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On Saturday, January 30, 2010, President Francois Bozize convoked the Central African political class and the Bangui diplomatic corps to discuss and resolve a contretemps over the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). He further took the opportunity to address, but not give clear answers to, the questions about the missing Central African politician and rebel leader, Charles Massi. The event was especially interesting as while it follows a format that Bozize has used before - airing an internal dispute before the international community - it is perhaps the first time that he has really been able to do political theatre with any success. Still, with each delay provoked by the opposition, critical time is lost for elections preparation - a fact that may lead to considerable controversy going forward. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (U) On January 13 a document from the Collective of Forces for Change - made up of the opposition umbrella organization National Union of Concerned Citizens (UFVN), several members of the non-aligned parties and one politico-military group - circulated Bangui. It denounced the IEC and its leader, Pastor Binguimale for partisanship, corruption, and various other ills. This group suspended its participation in the IEC and put forth the following complaints and demands:

-- The allegation that Binguimale is partisan in favor of President Bozize and must resign as a ``non negotiable'' precondition for them to return to the IEC.

-- Allegations of irregularities in the formation of local electoral committees, both in the CAR and abroad (specifically

by the consulate in Douala, Cameroon) and that all the local committees must be dissolved.

-- A demand for an audit of IEC funds and spending. (Rumor has it that there are serious irregularities; especially by the Chair.)

-- A demand that the implementation of the 2008 Inclusive Political Dialogue's recommendation that a representative - meaning a presidential majority and opposition - committee be established to deal with future political questions. (Comment: This demand may signal the opposition's attempt to form what they hope will be the backbone of a transitional government if the elections of 2010 are not held in time [Ref A]. End Comment).

13. (SBU) In a stroke of uncharacteristically deft political theatre, President Bozize convoked the entire IEC, his government, the opposition parties, the trade unions, and the diplomatic corps, to appear before him in a recorded and televised event broadcast from the Presidential palace. (Note: During a February 1 meeting with Emboffs, the UN Secretary General's Special Representative revealed that she had counseled Bozize a few days before to address the opposition's criticisms. End Note.) Bozize launched the spectacle by having the Minister of Communication read the opposition's document aloud. He then called on various members of the IEC and the opposition to explain themselves; either to repeat their charges or to provide excuses/explanations for their performance.

14. (SBU) Bozize has used this format before, most memorably to give the supreme constitutional court a face saving wire brushing when he was forced by the French to reinstall the court

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in late 2007. The great difference this time was the skill with which he kept everyone on the defensive while portraying himself as the father of the nation who was stepping in to put the electoral process back on track and prevent the ``Somalization'' of the CAR. He gave everyone a chance to speak, but firmly silenced heckling.

15. (U) As the senior diplomat present in the French Ambassador's absence, President Bozize asked Ambassador Cook to speak for the international community. Noting that he could only speak for the United States, the Ambassador reaffirmed the basic U.S. message:

-- The U.S. is not partisan in the electoral process; a process that must be run by the Central Africans themselves.

-- All armed groups must put down their weapons and participate in the political process.

-- The U.S. recognizes only one elected government and calls on that government to protect the human rights of its population and to encourage economic development.

-- The U.S. calls on all Central African parties to make peace with each other and to make good use of the generous international assistance programs in the CAR. (These comments met with public applause and private congratulations, from members of the Diplomatic Corps as well as both the government and opposition.)

Bozize then passed judgment:

-- There would be an audit of the IEC's finances.

-- The local electoral committees would be dissolved and new committees created.

-- Complaints would be resolved by the Head of the National Council of Mediation (Mediator) and the International Organization of the Francophonie, but not any new organization.

16. (SBU) This was a skillful bit of give and take. It allowed

Bozize to take the high road, stressing the independence of the IEC and thus isolating himself from any fallout that may occur, while at the same time, throwing disputes back on the Mediator, the disgraced former Archbishop of Bangui, who owes his political (if not spiritual) salvation to Bozize. (Note: The Archbishop was defrocked after Vatican authorities discovered his dalliances with several mistresses. End Note.)

17. (SBU) Bozize then invited commentary about Charles Massi (Ref B), asking both the opposition and human rights representative to make remarks. After listening to the charges, sourced from various international media, Bozize gave a most interesting non-answer. First, he set the stage by wondering aloud why there was so much ``human rights'' interest vis a vis Massi considering that he claimed to be with the militia groups responsible for violence in northeastern CAR (He made no mention of Soukoumba. [Ref C]). Where, he asked, was the concern for members of the Central African military (FACA) and civilians who had been killed? Why did none of the people so worried about Massi's human rights today not warn him of the dangers of engaging in armed conflict before he took to the bush? In response to allegations by Massi's wife that the President had personally tortured the former Minister, Bozize said that he had last seen Massi in N'Djamena, right after Massi left the government and that he had refused to meet with him at that time.

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18. (SBU) COMMENT: While the mechanics of the meeting were a rocky and it was a bit jolting for a head of state to say that he had missed some things as he had, ``ten thousand things to do,'' Bozize did appear more in control and presidential during this performance than usual. Bozize is not normally a comfortable orator but he tends to unwind a bit more when he speaks in Sango. Indeed some members of the government have been known to cringe as his Sango speeches are not scripted and have a much stronger populist flair (Note: During this 2010 new year's address, he threatened to ``carve up'' all who opposed him. END NOTE). During this entire performance, this time in French, Bozize appeared at ease, grilling people, making jokes, and finally pronouncing his decisions.

19. (SBU) The Collective of Forces for Change have yet to publically respond to the President's gambit and it appears that they may have been out-manuevered by Bozize this time. The press, even those normally critical of the President, are congratulating him for conducting an open dialogue with all the relevant actors. Additionally, the opposition's lack of a response, even some two days after the meeting, is symbolic of the deep divisions and rivalries among them. Nonetheless, it may be possible that this two week stalemate has accomplished a major goal for the opposition: many observers are starting to seriously worry that the elections will be delayed for organizational reasons, edging the opposition ever closer to its goal of a constitutional crisis and a transitional government. Thus, while Bozize may have displayed remarkable political acumen and clearly still wants elections on schedule, each crisis provoked by the opposition decreases the chances he will succeed. END COMMENT.

COOK